

Union Block

Building Address

113-117 N. Bridge Street

History of Building

The Union Block is one of two remaining substantially commercial blocks constructed during the 1880s. Samuel Synder, a local architect, designed the building, which was constructed in 1885, one-year after the former occupant Cobban Opera House was destroyed by fire. The commercial block housed several stores including the Jenkins Brothers Clothing Store and the Webb and Fletcher Hardware Store in the 1880s and 1890s. The Union Block has flat stone window heads, recessed brick panels, and irregularly-placed windows with stone lintels.

As early as the 1920s, the building's second story was used for law offices. In 1972, Waterman's Department Store occupied the ground floor while the Chamber of Commerce and law offices

occupied the second floor. This was when a unique, see-through mesh screen was added to the front of the building to allow the occupants on



Union Block, before.

the second floor to enjoy sunlight and breezes. Spurgeon's Department Store opened in 1974 and installed eight-foot high letters on the screen for signage. The store closed in 1994.

L.E. Investments, a partnership formed by the attorneys located on the second floor, have owned the building since 1980. They decided to renovate the

building, including making it handicap accessible. The National Park Service granted approval for the project on April 29, 1995.



Union Block, after.

Scope of Project

A major factor in the owners' decision to renovate was finding a strong retail tenant willing to commit to a long-term lease. Foreign 5, a bridal, jewelry, floral, and gift shop, moved in and made a substantial investment in the interior of the building. The retailer borrowed \$50,000 from the Main Street Low Interest Loan Pool in order to create a new look for the upscale store. In addition to the new paint and carpet, the basement was converted to a bridal showroom. The aluminum screen was removed from the exterior and the 108-year old heating and wiring systems were upgraded. In addition, an elevator was added to make the second floor handicap accessible.

Architect

Ayres Associates, Eau Claire

Total Cost

\$400,000+ (including \$60,000 on interior work done by Foreign 5)

For more information, call the Wisconsin Main Street Program at (608) 266-7531.

